

## The Vision of the Cross

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not at the opening of the campaign, as Eusebius would seem to suggest though he does not expressly say so, but on the eve of the decisive battle. There is nothing about the cross flaming in the afternoon sky, nothing of the inscription, "Conquer by This/" nothing of the entire army being witness of the portent Constantine simply has a dream and is warned (*commonitus*) to place the initial of Christ on his soldiers' shields. It is not even said who gave the warning; there is not a hint that it was Christ Himself—as in the story of Eusebius—who appeared to Constantine; there is no mention of the Labarum. Obviously, Lactantius was aware of no triumphant answer to Constantine's prayer for a sign. According to him, the Emperor was merely warned in a dream that victory would reward him if he dedicated his weapons to the honour and service of Christ.

We come back, therefore, to the official version of Eusebius somewhat shaken in our belief of its literal accuracy. Let us note, too, the extreme vagueness of the time and the place where the incident is reported to have taken place, and remember that one who had dwelt with Diocletian and Galerius when they signed the edicts of persecution could not possibly have been ignorant of the principles of Christianity, which was no longer the religion of an obscure sect. We need not, indeed, find any difficulty in accepting the first part of the story of Eusebius in so far as it represents Constantine anxiously enquiring after divine protection. It has been urged, very shrewdly, that the story would